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Letter from

Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles

U. S. ARMY, Retired

To the

Commanders and Companions

of the

*MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL
LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES*

DEFENSE DAY

SEPTEMBER 12th, 1924

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M.O. - d. L. U. S. - Conemaugh -
in Chief
5. 24 1925

The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States
Headquarters Commandery in Chief
1805 Pine Street

Philadelphia, Penna.
August 30, 1924.

*To the Commanders and Companions of
The Military Order of the Loyal Legion.*

As the Legislative and Executive Departments of the government have designated September 12th as "Defense Day," it is well for all patriotic organizations to be interested in this national enterprise and to take such action as will best promote an interest in and devotion to the welfare of our great Republic and its cherished Institutions. The Loyal Legion demonstrated its patriotism on more than a hundred battlefields and for more than a half century in all sections of our vast country, it has encouraged and advocated true patriotism as the surest safeguard to the permanent welfare of our beloved country.

All true citizens should have an intelligent knowledge of the history of the valor, fortitude and sacrifice required to secure our independence and to establish and maintain our national sovereignty. In order to exercise the duties and responsibilities of sovereign citizens, every one thus entitled to that great privilege should have a thorough knowledge of the advantages and blessings of our system of government.

Let us for a moment consider our present condition—more than one hundred millions of people occupying a continent, walled in by two great oceans, exercising the largest measure of civil government, enjoying more independence, freedom of thought and action, more security, prosperity and happiness than any people have ever enjoyed in the world's history. We might well ask the question "Do our people rightly comprehend and appreciate these unprecedented and bountiful blessings? Do our citizens realize the centuries of fortitude, dangers, valor and sacrifice endured by our ancestors before our freedom and independence was secured?" Our ancestors had long endured the oppression and tyranny of arbitrary and autocratic governments. A little more than a century ago the great mass of the human race were serfs, slaves or abject subjects of some despotic power, yet the spirit of liberty and the rights of the individual had been awakened in the mind and hearts of the people and they hoped and prayed for a better sphere of life.

The Magna Charter—June 15, 1215—The Compact on the Mayflower—November 11, 1620 and the Bill of Rights—February 13th, 1688 were instrumental in promoting a desire for freedom and creating a more enlightened civilization. The splendid patriotism of our fathers in 1776 inspired by the spirit of independence and love of liberty contended against the most powerful nation of the world for seven long years to establish our independence. That was a heroic age when the resolute men in every section of the sparsely populated colonies of the Atlantic coast espoused the cause of liberty. It brought forward from among that self-reliant, sturdy race the noblest and the bravest, the highest and most representative men of any age of any

country. Orators, scholars, statesmen, soldiers were the controlling spirits. There never has been a time, both in war and in peace—when this country has produced as strong a class of men intellectually, physically and morally as the men of that age. The highest, noblest and grandest of them all was that great character who was not only first in war but first in peace.

The citizens of America need not look elsewhere than to the Father of their country for an exemplar and a true patriotic character. No more instructive lesson could be given to the rising generations than to point them to his public acts, his state papers, his wise councils, his remarkable prophecy, and the sage warnings of the patriot and statesman who comprehended the passions and frailties of the human heart, and the dangers that would environ the great government that he had been so instrumental in establishing. He desired to prevent our nation from running the course that had "hitherto marked the destiny of nations" and it was his prayer that the "Union might be perpetual," that the "free constitution might be sacredly maintained and its administration conducted with wisdom and virtue," that the "happiness of the people under the auspices of liberty might be complete" and that they "might have the glory of recommending it to the affection and adoption of every nation that was as yet a stranger to it." He wrote to Lafayette that he "believed they had created the best constitution ever devised by human minds and that he hoped it might be administered with such wisdom and integrity that in time the people of the country would have the glory of commending it to the peoples of the world who were then strangers to it." That prayer of Washington's has been answered.

Patriotism does not alone require heroic acts upon the red fields of war. The patriotism of Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, Gouverneur Morris, Alexander Hamilton and their compatriots was as grand and glorious as that of the martial heroes of that day.

We believe our present form of government is the best to inspire the spirit of patriotism and to encourage its universal existence. Fortunately, patriotism, through the fortitude and heroism of those who have gone before, renders it unnecessary that the men of the present day should pay the price of liberty, independence, and good government; and fortunate will this nation be if it preserves them for many generations without the sacrifice that it has hitherto cost to achieve or maintain them. Naught but universal intelligence, virtue, and patriotism will ever maintain those institutions which our fathers established.

I cannot better define patriotism than by bringing the illustration home to every citizen. You have the opportunity of benefiting your country by your individual acts or of marring its prosperity by indifference or disregard to its true interest.

Every time a citizen exercises his right of citizenship, he either performs a treasonable or a patriotic act. Every office holder who devotes his time and attention to personal interests or to secure his own selfish purposes fails to discharge his duties as the representative of a free people.

The executives, the legislators, the officials, and servants of this country will be no better and no worse than the people. It is those who exercise the power of citizenship who are responsible for honesty and efficiency in our public affairs. The first requisite of good government is universal intelligence and moral character. To appreciate the principles of our institutions, to be able to exercise the right of citizenship intelligently, the sovereign citizens must be intelligent and conscientious. The elements that promote patriotism and good government are the family circle, the churches, the public schools, universities of learning, the forum, and last, but not least, the press, which is the great power to disseminate knowledge and to promote good or evil in this country.

This Republic must continue in its march of progress or it must lapse into decay by the acts of its own citizens. There is a sacred duty devolving upon every citizen. You can have just as good or just as bad a government as you please, be it municipal, state or national, and our only hope rests in the people's devotion to the principles of our government. May their patriotism be of the highest order and the influence of it felt in every department for the welfare, happiness, and progress of our own people.

At the age of twenty-eight years the immortal Lincoln advocated this wise political philosophy in the following language.

"I know the American people are much attached to their Government; I know they would suffer much for its sake; I know they would endure evils long and patiently before they would ever think of exchanging it for another; yet notwithstanding all this, if the laws be continuously disregarded and despised, if their rights to be secure and their persons and property are held by no better tenure than the caprice of a mob, the alienation of their affections from the Government is a natural consequence; and to that sooner or later must come. Here, then, is one point from which danger must be expected. The question recurs.. 'How then shall we fortify against it?' The answer is simple. 'Let every American, every lover of Liberty, every wellwisher to his posterity swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of '76 supported the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property and his sacred honor to this support—let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his fathers and to tear the charter of his own children's liberty. Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap; let it be taught in schools, seminaries and in colleges; let it be written in primers, in spelling books, and in almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit; proclaimed in legislative halls and enforced in courts of justice, and, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and young, the rich and poor, the grave and gay, of both sexes and tongues and colors sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars. Whenever a state of feeling such as this universally or even very generally prevails throughout the nation, vain will be every effort and fruitless every attempt to subvert our national freedom."

With sublime wisdom that pre-eminent statesman, patriot and martyr foresaw the dangers that would environ our institutions and possibly destroy our liberties and those of every other civilized country.

The appalling fate of Russia ought to be a warning to America. I have been twice in Russia and over the Trans-Siberian Railway. It is a country nearly three times the size of the United States and richer in mineral and agricultural wealth, yet in the hands of a horde of assassins representing one per cent of the population, between two and three millions out of employment, in a starving condition. They have executed or murdered 1,766,000 men, 800,000 of them farmers, 353,000 intellectuals—educated men, 10,000 doctors, altogether more men than were killed in the British, American, Italian, Belgian and Greek armies in the last great war.

We have all the elements of dissatisfaction, anarchy and revolution in our country, but fortunately the great mass of our people are intelligent, loyal, patriotic citizens.

The great problem of universal peace and international concord is now interesting the people of the world. Today many citizens and statesmen are considering this important subject. "Agree with thine adversary quickly" is a divine admonition. Possibly from the ashes of spoliation and the horrors and sacrifice of war there may come forth the spirit of universal peace that shall be appreciated and that shall actuate the hearts and motives of the human race. A League of Nations has been much under consideration. That is no new theory; they have existed for centuries—before the Crusaders and the Holy Alliance down to the Triple Alliance and the recent combination of nations that controlled the military and naval powers of the world. *A combination by which a nation surrenders its sovereignty will never be popular with the American people.*

A "Congress of Nations" has been advocated by the best minds of the world for centuries. The wisest statesmen and philosophers of ancient and modern times have advocated it. It was advocated before America was discovered. It is as old as international law. In 1622 a French author in a work entitled "*Le Nouvenu Cygue*" elaborated and advocated the proposition. Nearly a century and a half later Emanuel Kant gave it the approval of his profound legal and experienced knowledge. The principle was advocated more than two hundred years ago by that man of courageous faith and philanthropy, William Penn. Such brilliant minds as Hugo Gratius, Puffendoff, Vattel, and many others have championed the noble cause. Charles Sumner's great oration on the "True Grandeur of Nations" was delivered in 1845. Great meetings were held during the last century in England, France, Germany, Belgium, the Italian States and America advocating the propriety of convoking a Congress of Nations. Petitions have been addressed to the State Legislative assemblies and to our general government asking them to propose a Congress of Nations.

Legislative action was taken by both Houses of our Congress in an act approved August 29, 1916, in the following language, *viz.*

"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States to adjust and settle its international disputes through mediation or arbitration to the end that war may be honorably avoided." It looks with apprehension and disfavor upon a general increase of armament throughout

the world, but it realizes that no single nation can disarm, and that without a common agreement upon the subject, every considerable power must maintain a relative standing in military strength. In view of the premises, the President is authorized and requested to invite at an appropriate time, not later than the close of the War in Europe, all the great governments of the world to send representatives to a conference which shall be charged with the duty of formulating a plan for a court of arbitration or other tribunal to which disputed questions between nations shall be referred for adjudication and peaceful settlement, and to consider the question of disarmament and submit their recommendation to their respective governments for approval.

“The President is hereby authorized to appoint nine citizens of the United States who in his judgment shall be qualified for the mission by eminence in the law and by devotion to the cause of peace to be representatives of the United States in such conference.

“The President shall fix the compensation of said representatives and such secretaries and other employees as may be needed. Two hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated and set aside and placed at the disposal of the President to carry into effect the provisions of this paragraph.”

The judicious action of Congress did not destroy the sovereignty of the Nations nor create a supergovernment. This wise and humane act of the American Congress was passed by practically a unanimous vote in both the Senate and House of Representatives and had it been judiciously executed there is every reason to believe it would at that time have ended the most deplorable of all wars and saved millions of lives and the devastation, desolation and bankruptcy of many countries.

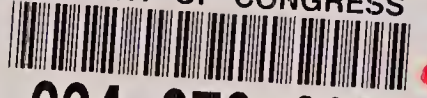
Two marked illustrations demonstrate the wisdom and justice of adjudicating international controversies by arbitration; one between the two great English speaking nations and the other between two South American nations memorialized by that highest monument of the world known as “The Christ of the Andes.” We must earnestly pray that human enlightenment and progress may continue to develop until the wisest and best minds shall meet in concord without surrendering their individual or national character and sovereignty, and shall devise judicious measures to adjust international controversies by arbitration *that* will be an event in which humanity will ascend to a higher sphere, a more exalted destiny. Then the entire world can celebrate the most important and progressive epoch in history.

We can then realize that—

“Out of the twilight of the past,
We move to a diviner light,
For nothing that is wrong can ever last
Nothing is immortal that is not right.”

Nelson A. Miles,
Commander in Chief.

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